

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 004187

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/12/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [IT](#) [IR](#) [RS](#) [EUN](#) [IAEA](#)

SUBJECT: BERLUSCONI AND PUTIN DISCUSS IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

CLASSIFIED BY: A/DCM SCOTT KILNER. REASON: 1.5 (B)(D)

1. (U) GUIDANCE REQUEST. SEE PARA 7.

2. (C) SUMMARY: DURING THEIR AUGUST 29-31 MEETING IN SARDINIA, RUSSIAN PRESIDENT PUTIN TOLD PM BERLUSCONI THAT RUSSIA IS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM. ACCORDING TO BERLUSCONI'S SENIOR DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR, PUTIN SAID THAT HE WAS DETERMINED TO MAKE IRAN SHIP SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL BACK TO RUSSIA. BERLUSCONI WILL WRITE TO PRESIDENT KHATAMI URGING IRANIAN COMPLIANCE WITH IAEA GUIDELINES. END SUMMARY.

3. (C) THE PM'S SENIOR DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR, GIOVANNI CASTELLANETA, TOLD DCM AND POLOFF ON SEPTEMBER 11 THAT PUTIN HAD CONFIDED TO BERLUSCONI THAT HE HAD MUCH GREATER CONCERNS THAN WHEN THEY LAST MET (IN JULY) OVER IRAN'S INTENTIONS FOR ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM. HE WAS THEREFORE DETERMINED TO PUT IN PLACE MEASURES TO KEEP THE PROGRAM CIVILIAN, AND TO MONITOR WHAT HAPPENS TO THE NUCLEAR FUEL RUSSIA IS SELLING TO IRAN. PUTIN PLANS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS BY DEMANDING THAT IRAN SHIP THE SPENT FUEL BACK TO RUSSIA. PUTIN IS NOT JUST THINKING ABOUT IT, SAID CASTELLANETA, HE IS GOING TO DO IT. CASTELLANETA THOUGHT, AND PUTIN'S OWN DIPLOMATIC ADVISORS CONFIRMED, THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT AN IRAN WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS WOULD REPRESENT A THREAT NOT ONLY TO THE MIDDLE EAST, BUT ALSO TO MANY OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION AND TO RUSSIA ITSELF.

4. (C) IN A WRITTEN RESPONSE TO A LETTER FROM IRANIAN PRESIDENT KHATAMI OUTLINING IRAN'S PROMISES THAT ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM WOULD REMAIN CIVILIAN AND IRAN WOULD SIGN THE IAEA PROTOCOL, BERLUSCONI WILL URGE IRAN TO MATCH ITS WORDS WITH ACTIONS. HE WILL EMPHASIZED TO KHATAMI THAT IRANIAN BEHAVIOR, SYMBOLIZED BY THE DISCOVERY OF TRACES OF PLUTONIUM IN TEHRAN, WAS NOT IN LINE WITH ITS COMMITMENTS TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. NOTE: THE PM'S OFFICE WILL PROVIDE EMBASSY WITH A COPY OF THE LETTER AS SOON AS IT IS SIGNED. END NOTE.

5. (C) DCM AGREED WITH CASTELLANETA'S ASSESSMENT THAT THE US AND EU MUST KEEP THE POLITICAL PRESSURE ON IRAN TO COMPLY WITH IAEA REGULATIONS, BUT THAT THE SITUATION WAS DELICATE. FOR ITALY, A MILITARY SOLUTION AT THIS TIME WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE. THE "COUNTDOWN HAS STARTED" TO THE END OF THE FRAGILE REGIME IN TEHRAN THROUGH INTERNAL PRESSURES. WE MUST BE CAREFUL, CAUTIONED CASTELLANETA, THAT TOO HARD A LINE AND TOO MUCH PRESSURE FROM THE OUTSIDE COULD CAUSE THE CONFLICTING FACTIONS WITHIN IRAN TO UNITE AGAINST A COMMON ENEMY.

6. (C) ACCORDING TO CASTELLANETA, THE ATMOSPHERICS DURING PUTIN'S VISIT TO BERLUSCONI'S SUMMER HOME ON THE ISLAND OF SARDINIA WERE EXCELLENT. PUTIN'S PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH BERLUSCONI HAS GROWN VERY STRONG, AND HE SEEMED TO BE VERY "PRO-WESTERN" IN HIS POLITICAL VIEWS, AS EVINCED BY PUTIN'S CONSIDERATION OF SENDING RUSSIAN TROOPS TO IRAQ UNDER US COMMAND. IN RESPONSE TO THE DCM'S OBSERVATION THAT PUTIN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH PRESIDENT BUSH WAS ALSO DEVELOPING POSITIVELY, CASTELLANETA NOTED THAT PUTIN SAID HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO HIS UPCOMING TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES FOR THE UNGA AND MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BUSH. PUTIN PROMISED TO RAISE WITH THE PRESIDENT MANY OF THE SAME ISSUES OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE HE AND BERLUSCONI COVERED IN SARDINIA.

7. (SBU) CASTELLANETA WILL ACCOMPANY BERLUSCONI ON HIS TRIP TO THE US SEPTEMBER 21-24. HE HAS OFFERED TO REMAIN BEYOND THAT TIME IF THE US WANTS TO SCHEDULE A MEETING, WITH NSA RICE FOR INSTANCE, AFTER THE CRUSH OF UNGA RELATED ACTIVITIES. DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE IS REQUESTED ON HOW WE SHOULD RESPOND TO CASTELLANETA'S OFFER.

SEMBLER

NNNN

2003ROME04187 - Classification: CONFIDENTIAL